

The dilemma of a good man

by bloomandgrow

Category: Sound of Music

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-12 08:28:11

Updated: 2016-04-19 09:42:30

Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:21:59

Rating: K

Chapters: 2

Words: 4,904

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The Captain and Maria have been married for a couple of years. With the Anschluss looming, difficult decisions have to be made. I do not own TSOM. Reviews, good or bad, are always welcome. K rating.

1. Chapter 1

Maria patted her nearly five month bump tenderly, speaking softly to the child that had been conceived in such love and joy, and who was now growing so strongly under her heart "Where can your father be? He seems to have completely disappeared." She searched for her husband everywhere, finally finding him sitting outside on one of the garden benches, oblivious to the cold and staring unseeingly at the dark waters of lake and the night sky. He had been quiet during dinner, barely making any conversation, while the children chattered around him, and she had watched him with concern and love. The latest news from the wireless had been troubling to say the least. The talk of Anschluss was growing stronger each day.

"Darling, it's cold, come inside," she said softly. But he just shook his head. She kissed the top of his head and sat next to him on the bench in silence, respecting his need to be alone with his thoughts but squeezing his hand at the same time.

After a while he said quietly "Last week when we went for a walk in the mountains, surrounded by such exquisite beauty it made me realize even more how much we have to lose. I want all the children to be able to appreciate the extraordinary beauty of this country and understand what it means to be an Austrian. I hope the children will never let their love for Austria die no matter what happens."

She could tell he had been brooding again, his anguish over the future had been present throughout their marriage, often triggered by further grim news from the newspapers that would leave him tight-lipped with anger and frustration. It also filled her own heart with cold dread, not knowing what would happen and what it would mean for her very principled and honorable husband. She squeezed his hand

tightly in agreement as he continued.

"The Third Reich is waiting like a ravening wolf to devour us. Everything is so uncertain - the empire has disintegrated and Austria's fragile democracy has already been crushed. When Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by those jack-booted Nazi thugs I thought things could not be worse, but I think there will be many more dark days ahead. Hitler humiliates Chancellor von Schuschnigg at every turn. They are trying to strangle us economically and bring us to our knees politically. I don't know how long von Schuschnigg can hold out for the dream of a free and independent Austria."

The looming horror of the future increasingly intruded on the peaceful oasis of their family life and it was growing in intensity. Last week, Marta had come home from school and said her teacher had played the German anthem Deutschlandlied to the class encouraging the children to learn the words of the first stanza. The music was an exquisite piece, ironically composed by an Austrian composer "Josef Haydn" with a lovely harmonization that could melt the coldest heart. It was called the Emperor quartet and was dedicated to the Austrian emperor, but it was now overlaid by an ugly, aggressive ethos of Nazi domination. The lyrics "Deutschland Ã¼ber alles" 'Germany over all' from the first stanza were now being reinterpreted to represent Nazi expansionist goals.

Georg's eyes had instantly lit with fury and he had snapped that he would rather drink ground glass in his tea before he would sing that song.* The children had been startled by his vehemence. Maria had placed her hand on his arm to soothe him and he had made a visible effort to calm himself, explaining simply that he did not believe in what the Nazi's believed in Germany and that their own values as a family were completely opposed to the Nazi's immoral and repugnant ideas. The children listened as he told them about those abhorrent beliefs, astonished, in a way that only children can be, that other adults could not so easily tell the difference between right and wrong as their father could.

Now, sitting outside, he was silent for a long time, lost in his thoughts and fears for what would come. She too, felt a familiar sick feeling in the pit of her stomach whenever she thought of the bleak future. Then he said, "Maria, I know we have argued many times about this before, but I must do what is right for Austria when the time comes."

It continued to be a source of tension between them, their first argument on their honeymoon and the only issue in which they were not in accord in their marriage. If the time came, he wanted her to leave with the children for England or France and safety while he remained behind. Maria of course, as stubborn as he was, flatly refused, leading to many difficult arguments.

"Georg listen to me " "

"No, you listen to me," he said forcefully. "If the Nazis take over Austria, I will need you to take the children to England long before. You will all be safe with Agathe's family. I don't think that even Hitler would dare take on the might of the British Empire. If you prefer to go to France or the Netherlands I also have friends there who can help you. I will stay here and do what is necessary. I cannot stand by and let Austria be destroyed forever, even if they put me in

prison."

"They will kill you. If they can kill the Chancellor of the Austrian Republic they would just as easily destroy you. I read the papers too, I know what they do to anyone who opposes their vile hate-filled ideas in Germany, they would do the same here."

"Maria, you know the words of the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke from 100 years ago â€" _all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.**_ I made a lifelong oath to serve and defend Austria when I joined the Imperial navy. I will not run away from this. How could I live with myself if I did nothing to safeguard Austria's freedom â€" its very existence? Perhaps if there are enough of us who oppose them we can make a difference."

She pleaded with him "Georg, who amongst your friends would stand with you? Although some do not agree with them, they only say it quietly, fearfully and not publically the way you do. Some are intimidated by their ugly threats, while others are taken in and deceived by their lies and false promises. I am not asking you to be less than you are. I know your courage, integrity and honour are greater than any other man's. But you have to think of your family first. You have always said that there is nothing you wouldn't do for the children. If you die, you will destroy their lives. They have already lost their mother, they would not be able to bear losing you too."

She was struggling to get the words out as tears clogged her throat and threatened to spill from her eyes. "And what about this precious baby â€" he will need his father with him as he grows up." She placed his hand on their child. He closed his eyes almost as if in pain and heaved a heavy sigh, then he leaned across and tenderly kissed and caressed her stomach as she stroked his hair.

Standing up, he drew her to her feet, enfolding her in his arms and kissing her softly. He said quietly "What kind of world will this child be born into, if people do not stand up to evil? I need to do this for the future of all our children, to protect our homeland and our values. There are times when a man has to follow his conscience no matter what the price."

She swallowed, anguish clutching at her heart. "Your sacrifice would be wasted, but if you save yourself now then you can live to fight a battle that can be won. And as I have said many times before if that is path you choose then I will stay by your side after we send the children to safety."

"No! You must do as I say," his temper was beginning to fray at her stubbornness. "I will _never_ let you do that, the children need you and you must take care of this baby. I will not let you face any danger."

"If we are lucky we will have a few more years yet before anything happens. I will not leave you â€" "

"Maria, why must you be so difficult about this?" he interrupted angrily. "When we married you made a vow before God to obey me," he reminded her furiously.

"Well you knew from the day we met that I would always be terrible at

following orders." She made a weak attempt to smile. "And in any case I also made a vow to God to love and honor you, and during our honeymoon when we went to the Notre Dame, I gave thanks to God for giving me this wonderful life with you and I promised God I would never leave your side, no matter what."

"You have a responsibility to the children â€"

"And so do you!" this time she interrupted passionately. "They do not want a heroic martyred father. They need you alive and well to guide them through life. They will always carry Austria in their hearts, even if Austria is obliterated from the map, and that is a form of resistance in itself, but they cannot manage without you."

He rubbed the back of his neck in frustration and then walked over and angrily gripped the gate leading down to the water. As in their other arguments over this he was infuriated by her refusal to accede to his wishes. Her fears and anguish made her feel ready to weep but she would not give in on this, it was too important. If she did not stop him he would walk heedlessly into his doom. It would be a courageous but utterly futile act since few others would join him. And she knew losing him would be more than she could bear. She understood far better now how it was that he had been so lost in grief and despair over his first wife. She did not know how she would be able to find the strength to carry on if he were gone forever.

"Georg, please darling, let's not fight over this now. I think we all realize that it will happen but I hope it will not happen for some time. There may be other options â€" if we all leave Austria together we can still fight them. Others will oppose them and we can join them. I have faith that we will make the right decision for the family when the time comes."

"Maria, you know my faith is not strong like yours, I have seen too much horror in the last war which was supposed to be the war to end all wars."

Both of them felt the heavy weight of oppression of their argument but were unable shake it off and bridge the yawning gulf between them. She felt so upset that the day that had started off so beautifully should end with a wedge driven between them.

This morning had started with much laughter when she scolded him for his ridiculous over-protectiveness over her pregnancy, but secretly enjoying the breakfast in bed and the way he seemed happy to attend to her every need. It had progressed to them watching the children playing an exuberant game of volleyball, with Georg joining in but refusing to allow Maria to do so too. He made up for it by occasionally stealing kisses when the children were not looking. Afterwards he and the boys had come up with increasingly absurd names for the coming baby, with the boys insisting that this time it would be a boy to balance out the family and the girls objecting with annoyance. She had enjoyed the good natured bickering of her wonderful family, her heart full of happiness.

Now however all she felt was an aching sense of fear and grief. She realized with her heart breaking that one of the reasons Georg gave so freely and generously of himself to both her and the children was because perhaps he feared deep inside that time was running out. He

was living each precious moment as if it should be treasured, cherished and lived to the fullest. Perhaps that was also why - although his delight and joy over her pregnancy had been boundless - there were still shadows in his eyes sometimes when he touched and kissed her growing stomach. He was fearful of bringing another child into this terrible uncertainty.

She prayed every day to God, to give her the guidance to steer him away from the path he seemed determined to take, a brave path but ultimately a fatal one. For a man of his courage, honor and sense of duty the dilemma was an easy one - "defending his country was more important than his own safety" as he had proven time and again during the Great War. But if she could make him see how it would destroy his beloved children, then perhaps that would give him pause. She would never put this baby in danger. But she knew her arguments about the baby and the children were probably one of the few things that might persuade him to change his mind. She only hoped that when the time came, her persuasion would be enough.

Suddenly she felt a tiny movement almost like a butterfly fluttering its tiny wings in her stomach and she felt a great surge of elation and hope. She walked over to her husband who was staring out at the lake, and put his hand on her stomach again, her hand covering his. He felt the first small soft movements, and despite this being his eighth child, there was still a splintering wonder and awe in his eyes.

"Your son or daughter is reaching out to us with its tiny hand," she said with tears of happiness in her eyes. "This baby will live to see a better world than the one that we are facing right now" - "I am sure of it."

As he stroked her stomach gently, reaching out to their child, his eyes lost the look of a man staring into the abyss and instead were suffused with love and tranquility. He kissed the tears away from her cheeks.

She led him back inside and upstairs to their room. As she shut the door she felt as if she were shutting the door on the bleakness of the future so that they could - at least for the moment - enjoy the many precious blessings of the present.

Notes

*The 'ground glass' words are words from the real Captain von Trapp, as told by Maria von Trapp in her book The Trapp Family Singers

**The quote "_all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing" _has been attributed to a number of philosophers including Burke, John Stuart Mill and Plato.

2. Chapter 2

**A/N Thank you for the kind reviews, they are much appreciated. Thanks especially to Sara KM for the historical inputs. This chapter will have less angst than the first one, I promise
****J**

"Gentlemen, I do hope you will forgive me if I retire early, but I am sure you have so much to catch up on." Maria smiled gracefully at the gathered company, as she placed a hand on her baby bump concealed beneath her lovely evening gown. All the men, including her husband, rose immediately from the dining table, bowing elegantly with their impeccable manners, some clicking their heels together. They all complimented her and thanked her for the wonderful evening. She replied to them with such natural charm it was hard to believe that she had not been born into this elegant life. With pride in his eyes, Georg took her hand and kissed the back of it goodnight, his eyes conveying his private message. She squeezed his hand in response, giving her own loving message back with her eyes.

Privately she only hoped her latest strategy to make Georg see sense over his determination to stand against the Anschluss would work. A few days after their argument over whether he should stay behind to oppose the Anschluss while she and the children left Austria, she had suggested to him that he invite some of his brothers-in-arms from his navy days to catch up. She did not however, reveal her underlying motive to him - that they would hopefully be able to divert him from his dangerous course and talk some sense into him.

He had reluctantly agreed to invite them, though he had grumbled that he would much rather spend the evening with her and the children than with a bunch of 'ill mannered, drunken bores' as he dryly called them. She could tell though that he had been looking forward to the evening as he had made sure Franz had the library well stocked with single-malt whiskey, expensive cognac and cigars.

After she left the dining room, she could hear the men relaxing and letting go of their formality, some of them ribbing Georg about his young wife, though careful not to go too far in their ribald remarks, since he was infamous amongst the group for his fierce temper. She smiled as one asked Georg if he intended to have another seven children with her. She did not catch Georg's muttered response.

Someone else called out "You know Georg, I never knew that nuns were so beautiful and enchanting, I think in the future I may start lurking outside convents to hopefully convince one to become my next wife." Another said to loud laughter, "It's hard to believe that a rake like you would end up marrying a nun" since when does a devil get to marry an angel?" Georg's tone became irritated as he answered that she had only been a postulant rather than a nun. With a small laugh Maria could just imagine the scowl on his face, his brows furrowed in annoyance.

She saw Franz going towards the dining room with a tray. "Franz the gentlemen will be going to the library shortly and then you can finish for the night, thank you."

"Very well Baroness" his eyes somehow managed to be even colder than usual.

There was something about Franz that always made her uneasy. It wasn't the disdainful way he had treated her when she first arrived, looking down his patrician nose at her - she had gotten used to that. She knew that he was a consummate snob so he would rather have had the elegant and well-born Baroness Schrader as mistress of the house. No doubt he could not understand why the Captain had chosen her

instead, but she did not let it bother her. It was more his coldness and watchfulness that she was most wary of. In her planning for this evening she had insisted that he should finish his work early so that Georg and his friends should have complete privacy. Franz, clearly not happy, had consulted Georg, who had got irritated and told him that he should always follow the Baroness' instructions since she was the mistress of the house.

As she climbed the stairs she stroked the baby nestled in her body, speaking softly to it, "With any luck your clever mother will succeed in keeping your very brave but foolhardy father safe. He may have a chest full of medals but let's see if we can't out-maneuver him."

The evening so far had been a success. The men had all arrived without their wives, complicitly and gleefully intending to have an all night drinking session without the need for the gentility and refinement their wives would expect. Most were staying overnight in the guest suites upstairs. Soon after they arrived the children had performed some lovely Austrian folk songs and classical songs. Maria was touched by how moved those battle-hardened and cynical war veterans were. Their compliments to the children were very warm and effusive.

She had last seen most of the officers at the her wedding two years ago, though she had to admit that there were so many guests and it was such a whirlwind sensations for her that she could not remember each one individually.

She did remember though, the wonderful double honor guard that they had formed as she and Georg had emerged from the cathedral as man and wife. Looking magnificent in their dress uniforms with their ceremonial swords unsheathed and raised in arcs over their heads, they had made a passage for the newlywed couple to walk through. She could tell even Georg was touched by their display.

Later, at the wedding reception, which again, she only remembered fragments of, many of his fellow retired officers had made toasts to the bridal couple after she and Georg had cut the enormous wedding cake with his own ceremonial sword. He had made witty and charming responses to their toasts, ever the refined aristocrat with his sophisticated banter, though his words of love and pride in tribute to his new wife were unvarnished in their beauty and simplicity. She had struggled to keep the tears from falling.

Maria remembered that the men at her wedding had all been charming, though some of their wives had been less so. She knew there was much gossip that she and Georg had been living as husband and wife for a considerable time before their marriage. Some of the wives had looked speculatively at her slender waist in her lovely wedding gown to see if there was another reason why Georg had suddenly abandoned his courtship of Baroness Schrader to marry his governess. She was simply too happy to mind, knowing in her heart that neither of them had done anything dishonorable, so she could hold her head up high.

As she reached the children's floor her thoughts came back to the present. She checked in on each of the sleeping children. She tucked the blankets more firmly around Gretl and Marta, her heart brimming with love for her two adorable little girls who were now growing up fast. Brigitta's eyes were closed, as usual with the light still on

and a book open on her bed. Maria put it away and stroked her hair gently so she would not wake up. Kurt had his mouth slightly open and Friedrich's hair was endearingly ruffled as she looked with pride at her two fine young sons. Louisa looked serious even in sleep while Liesl looked as beautiful and serene as ever. As she kissed all of her children she made a silent promise to each that she would do her best to keep their father from harm.

As she made her way to her room she wondered how the men were getting on downstairs. She could hear the occasional burst of raucous laughter from the library. She had placed a lot of hope in one officer in particular " Heinrich - to help her save her husband. She had taken to Heinrich immediately because of his kind and sincere eyes. He had been Georg's First Officer on his U-boat patrols in the Adriatic and she knew that he was fiercely loyal to her husband.

During the pre-dinner drinks she had drawn him aside to confide in him and ask his advice on what she should do to keep her husband safe. "Heinrich, I do hope you can help me. I am so worried about Georg. You know how opposed he is to the coming Anschluss and he often says it publically. It is getting more and more dangerous, and the worst thing is that he wants to send me and the children away so that he can stay here and make his opposition to the Anschluss known. When the Nazis take power I know what they will do to him. I am so scared for him but I can't seem to persuade him to change his mind."

Heinrich's eyes had been sympathetic and worried. "Baroness, I am aware that the Captain has these views, and he does not seem to be bothered who hears them. He also cannot resist baiting Zeller, who could become extremely powerful soon " he will be a formidable enemy to have. The Captain has always been his own man, with strong and principled views, and I fully respect that, but I agree with you Baroness, it is very dangerous to be so forthright in these turbulent times. When the Anschluss comes he will be in a very difficult situation."

"But that's just it Heinrich. He believes he has to make a public stand for Austrian freedom and independence as part of the oath he made to the Imperial navy. He loathes the Nazis, but they are getting more powerful every day. I'm so frightened Heinrich, because he is so stubborn. I fully respect his views too but I know we cannot be safe here when the Anshcluss comes. He would never be able to live under them in silence. I must persuade him to come away with us but I simply don't know how. Can you help me? Perhaps if you and the others here this evening can talk to him, he may listen."

"I'll do my best Baroness, but you should know that most of this group do not agree with the Captain. Many are military men who refuse to get involved in politics " they will serve whoever is in power. The military was their whole life " at least until we were all forced into retirement at the end of the Great War under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. I know Werner and Hans for example would be thrilled if they were offered commissions in the Third Reich navy. The new German U-boats are huge and sleek with very advanced technology compared to what we had in the Great War.

Also Baroness, some of the others in this group feel a great camaraderie with the Germans and look forward to the union. They

remember fighting side by side with them during the Great War. They see Germans as cousins who have been through similar difficult times. Many still feel angry and humiliated over the terms of the Treaty of Versailles which bankrupted both our countries, decommissioned the naval forces and imposed impossible and onerous conditions.

And another thing Baroness, as you know Austrian politics have been chaotic since the fall of the dual monarchy " there has been so much violence and turmoil. Everyone is craving for some sort of order and stability. They feel that with a strong Third Reich we can get back the pride and dignity that we have lost. So I am afraid that we may not have much influence over the Captain. These views could just make him angrier and more determined to make a stand."

"Well we can only try, Heinrich. Let's just see what happens. Please, Heinrich, I beg of you - do your best" Maria had pleaded with him. As she had looked around she noticed that Georg had been watching them from the other side of the room, looking distinctly annoyed. She hoped he hadn't guessed what she was up to, as he had made his way towards them.

"Heinrich" he had nodded curtly towards his former First Officer.

"Captain", Heinrich greeted back, clicking his heels and bowing slightly. Some habits die hard, Maria had observed with some amusement. She could tell that Heinrich was struggling to curb his instincts to salute his former commander.

"If you could excuse us for a moment please Heinrich, I'd like a word with my wife."

"Of course Captain," He bowed again.

Georg had looked at her with an unreadable expression. "You seemed to be having a very intense discussion with young Heinrich...?" he had questioned.

"Oh not really, we were just talking about your old navy days," she had lied, and she knew he could tell because he raised an eyebrow skeptically as her cheeks went pink.

He had looked at her for a long moment. "Well perhaps you will tell me later on what you really talked about," he had suggested with a definite edge to his voice. She hoped that he would not figure out about her little conspiracy with Heinrich if her plan was to work.

Fortunately Georg's mood improved during dinner, and they all had a very pleasant meal together as they told amusing anecdotes of their days in the Imperial navy. As soon as dessert was finished she retired for the evening, falling asleep exhausted and cradling her baby bump tenderly.

She awoke with a start at dawn, as Georg stumbled in, tripping over something in the bedroom with a curse. He undressed and climbed into bed smelling strongly of whiskey and cigars, nuzzling her neck and mumbling something incoherent as his hands roamed. Then, to her amusement, he abruptly fell asleep. So much for the suave, debonair charmer, she thought with a small laugh as she drifted back to sleep.

She would see later in the morning with Heinrich whether her plan had worked.

End
file.